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THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN GROUPSTRESS IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH II.*

Just as a number of syllables may by a strong accent be bound together in a higher unit called a word, a number of words may by a strong accent be bound together in a higher unit called a group. Such accents are more or less mechanical in their nature and merely serve to mark the identity of the different words and groups. These accents are vital to the thought, for if they are arbitrarily misplaced the thought is at once impaired.

The oldest form of a Germanic group known to us is found in old compounds and groupwords as already explained in the first part of this treatise. The stress was invariably upon the first member of the group. The first member is invariably the grammatically dependent member and, though uninflected, indicates all the varied syntactical relations that are later more clearly expressed by inflectional forms: (subject) "fótswýle" *swelling of the foot*; (object) "fótþwéal" *washing the feet*; (adverb) "níwtýrwed" *fréshly tarred*; (prepositional phrase) "heáfodbeðrht" *bright as to his head*; "heáfodwund" *wound in the head*; "flétsittend" *sitting in the hall*; etc. Some such device as this fixed wordorder with the dependent member in the first place was absolutely necessary to indicate the grammatical relations. Perhaps the oldest Germanic wordorder, which requires the verb at the end with all its modifiers before it, is a survival of this oldest order of things. As the stress in all the old groups given above is quite uniformly on the first syllable and the dependent word always has the first place the stress and the wordorder must be more or less mechanical. When for logical reasons it was desired to emphasize some other member than the first the stress was probably placed on the emphatic member, as is found in many simple modern forms of expression that have come down to our day: *dóorknòb*, *doórlòck*, but *the doòrknób*, not *the doòrlòck*.

The remarkable thing about mechanical groupstress is that in the following centuries it did not, in general, shift from the word on which it originally rested. Later when the modern group required the stress to rest upon the last member the word that

* The first part of this article appeared in vol. XIII, pp. 493-498.

was originally in the first place and was stressed simply moved to the last place retaining its original strong stress: (Old English) *hærlòcc*, now *lòck of hár*. This simple principle will help us in studying the development of modern groups.

While the old groups were fairly well understood without the inflection of the first member the rise of inflectional forms often prompted the desire to employ the new inflectional form to indicate more clearly the syntactical relations. In *Beowulf* the old groups are still freely used on every page, but the younger groups with inflection are already much more common. They differ from the older groups only in the inflection of the first member, the wordorder usually remaining unchanged, i. e., the dependent member usually preceding its governing word. “þonne *fórstes bènd* faeder onlaeteð” (1611) “when Father frees the *fètters of the fróst*.” In *Beowulf* the number of stressed genitives that thus stand in the first place is very large. Later these stressed genitives that were once so common in the position before the governing noun gradually assumed the last place, thus following the governing noun. As described by the writer in *Modern Philology* vol. XI, in his article “The Development of the Genitive in Germanic,” the movement of the stressed genitive from the first place in the group to the last place became so common in the course of Old English that in certain categories the genitive is rarely found *before* the governing noun at the close of the period. This great fondness of the stressed genitive for the last place indicates clearly that it was felt as its normal position and the stress was a mere mechanical groupstress.

What effected this change of order? When did it take place? In a number of cases in *Beowulf* there is a stressed genitive that stands *after* the governing noun: “Déna *lånd*” (l. 1904) *lånd of the Dánes*, but “*lånd* Déna” in l. 242, which runs “þe on land Dena laðra nænig.” Authors of metrical treatises usually stress *land* in the second example because it alliterates with *laðra* in the same line while *Dena* does not. This theory is absolutely without a basis of fact, indeed it is diametrically opposed to all the facts of English and German development. Germanic poets have never distinguished between principal and secondary stress. It is perfectly plain that *Dena* in both of the above examples has the stress. It had the stress in *Beowulf* when it preceded the noun and it kept its stress when it moved to the position after the noun and it has

retained it to this very day. The writer has long sought for the force that was operative in moving the stressed genitive from the position before the governing noun to the place after it. This change seems in large measure to have resulted from the influence of other groups that were beginning in the early Old English period to become more common: *sè áldor* (369) *thè prince*; *tò séle* (l. 323) *tò the háll*; *he hæfde mód* (1167) *he hàd courage*. Originally the noun had no article. Little by little the unstressed article established itself before the stressed noun. Prepositional groups with the stress upon the last member became more and more common. The stressed object and adverb which used to precede the less stressed verb became established after the verb. Thus a type of group was becoming fixed that was the very opposite of that found in the oldest groups. The stressed genitives in accordance with the new principle of groupstress gradually became established in the last place. The manifold changes of position that took place in the course of the Old English period can in large measure be explained by the steady operation of the new groupstress. In earlier years the writer was often inclined to seek for intricate psychological forces to explain these changes, while, today, the operation of this simple mechanical groupstress is to him a sufficient explanation for most cases.

It seems also probable that this same power—the new groupstress—was a potent factor in dissolving the old groupwords like “*eágwùnd*” *wound in the éye*, “*fótswýle*” *swèlling of the foót*, etc. They long resisted the dissolution into modern groups on account of their greater firmness of form and greater oneness of meaning, but later conformed to the new type. In German, however, they are well preserved.

In addition to the influences cited above as factors in bringing about the new type of groupstress it is probable that the influence of groups containing an adjective was a potent force. In the oldest groups the attributive adjective was invariably in the first place, as in such modern survivals as *bláckbèrry*. Gradually the stress of the adjective became less prominent and the noun assumed the principal stress, as found in *blàck báss*, *Blàck Prince*, etc. The indications of the weaker stress of the adjective are already to be observed in *Beowulf*, where this is sometimes clearly indicated by placing the adjective after the noun, as in “*mód micel*” (1167) *grèat courage*. Here *mod* precedes *micel* in accordance with the

principle that the important word comes first, just as an important object could precede the verb. We have a few survivals of this type in modern English, as in *móther deàr*. This type showed some signs of life in Beowulf but did not become common because it was opposed to the new growing type with the stress upon the last member. It was found more natural to conform the old type with the adjective before the noun, to the new type by simply transferring the stress from the adjective to the noun without disturbing the old historical wordorder, *blàck shèep* becoming *blàck sheép*. To the feeling of the writer many adjectives in Beowulf, as in “hàlig gód” (381) *our hòly Gód*, have less stress than the following noun. If the adjective before the noun were really stressed in Beowulf we would find in the course of Old English a strong tendency to place the stressed adjective after the more weakly accented noun to conform to the new growing groupstress, but there are no cases of the kind to be observed anywhere in Old English.

It seems quite clear that the adjective lost its stress quite early in the Old English period. As its position before the noun had become fixed or functional, it lost its stress as the group naturally conformed to the new groupstress. This is the only case where the historic stress of a member has been disturbed. It is easily explained by the fact that the stress of an adjective is even today very irregular. It often takes a strong logical accent, as in “The *lóng* pèncil has the *sóftest* lèad,” and again often has a rather weak accent conforming to the modern mechanical groupstress, as in *a hòt potáto*, *a frièd égg*, etc. The same condition probably existed in Old English. As the adjective often had weak stress it never developed a tendency to take a place after the noun as it would have done had it had a uniformly strong accent. In the few cases where the adjective stands after the noun in Old English it is to indicate weak stress as explained above.

Although, as we have seen, different forces were for centuries busily at work removing the stressed genitive from the first place to the last, stressed genitives are still often found in the first place: Jóhn’s books not William’s. What has preserved this type? It seems quite clear that the accent is here very strong, not a mere mechanical stress. The strong stress upon the first element is in harmony with the principle also found elsewhere that the first position is the proper place for words that have a strong logical

stress. Thus in Old English and German only those stressed words that had a lighter, more mechanical stress moved away from the first to the last place: the books of Jónh and his older brother. On account of the loss of inflection English has to use here the analytical genitive instead of the syntactical genitive found in Old English. German still preserves the older form: Luther steht grammatisch der mittelhochdeutschen Periode näher als der neuhochdeutschen; die *Sprache Öpitzens und seiner Freunde* ist neuhochdeutsch. The use of the logically stressed genitive before the noun is also quite limited in English on account of the lack of inflectional forms. We say "the children's hats," "the women's hats," "men's clothing," but "the hats of the girls," etc. In German there is here free use of the logically stressed genitive before the noun: Wílhelms Bücher, nicht méine. Germans prefer here the form of a groupword instead of a modern group wherever the genitive is not modified by an adjective: gegen eine Wélt-herrschaftspolitik, gegenseitige Freúndschaftsversicherungen, im Augenblicke des Kriegsausbrúches, Studéntenkréise, etc. Often also in the older form of the groupword without inflection of the first member: nach Stúckzähl (=der Stúcke Zähl), Kóp fzählung, etc. Often also preserved in English in certain set expressions: stúdent cìrcles, éyebrows, etc. Quite different from this logical stress is the mechanical stress often found upon the genitive in German poetry: O Kolchis! o du meiner Väter lánd! (Grillparzer's Medea, 1)=Lánd meiner Väter. This is the survival of Old German usage, also very common in Beowulf as mentioned above. Of course, if the genitive is not stressed it must precede the genitive to conform to modern groupstress: William's books, Wílhelms Bücher.

In the oldest groups the first member was always a grammatically dependent element. A fixed wordorder was necessary to keep the syntactical relations clear. The governing word could never be put in the first place even under strong stress. After the introduction of inflection the governing word could also for emphasis, in accordance with the principle of accentuation found elsewhere, be put in the first place, as the syntactical relations were clearly expressed by inflectional forms: (logical stress) hátost heaðoswata (B. l. 1667) *hótest of wárriorbloods*; (mechanical stress) cwén Hròðgares (613) *Hròthgar's wife*. The weaker mechanical

stress on the first member later yielded to the newer mechanical stress upon the last member as seen by the modern translation of the second example. This tendency to conform to the new mechanical groupstress is already found in *Beowulf*, as explained above by the example *lând Dēna* (242).

A careful study of this article will reveal the fact that the simple laws of logical and mechanical groupstress of our own time were already felt in early Old English, as yet not well differentiated but slowly unfolding.

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